

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Our World Neighborhood Charter School
February 26, 2013
7:00pm-9:00pm

The monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees of Our World Neighborhood Charter School was held on Tuesday, April 23, 2012 at 7:00 pm at the Elementary School of Our World Neighborhood Charter School (36-12 35th Avenue, Astoria, NY 11103).

The Trustees Present were:

Jeanette Betancourt, President
Steve Solinsky, Vice President and Treasurer
Maura Fitzgerald, Secretary
Mary Bogle
Melissa Chin
Sara Geelan

Also present were:

Brian Ferguson, Executive Director
Lisa Edmiston, Principal
Abimbola Disu Olaya, Vice Principal
Karinne Montaque, Business Manager
Mark Crustante, Development Director
Jayme Pabon, Teacher Representative
Jamey Greco, Special Education Director
Lucille Ranchor, Admissions Coordinator
Yawne Robinson, Data Manager Analyst
Sarah Espanol, PTO Co-Chair
Charles Guadagnolo, Prospective Board Member

Jeanette Betancourt, President of OWNCS Board of Trustees, chaired the meeting.

Board of Trustees Business - Jeanette Betancourt

Board Membership

Charles Guadagnolo is attending his first meeting as a prospective Board member. He has been interviewed by several members of the Board and has visited the school. Mr. Guadagnolo shared with us that the school speaks strongly to his interests and background. He said he found the students at OWNCS “amazing” and “enthusiastic.” Mr. Guadagnolo has done international development work on a school construction project in India, and has served as a UN liaison to non-profit organizations. He also worked in the financial sector as an analyst and now runs his family’s construction business, Guad Contracting.

Strategic Planning

The Board retreat to focus on the Strategic Plan has been scheduled for April 13.

Director's Report - Brian Ferguson

Funding and Reporting

NY State has announced that per pupil funding will be frozen for the fourth year in a row. It's also possible that federal Title I and Race to the Top funds will be affected by the sequester.

NYSED has issued a Charter School Audit guide in an effort to produce more consistent reporting from schools. The Executive Director's first impression is that OWN is in compliance with most of the recommendations, however it will be reviewed in more detail by the Finance and Audit Committees. One element we will need to understand better is the requirement for a peer review of our audit. We will start by verifying what our auditors are already doing, but we should be aware that this may alter their scope of work, and may result in an increase to their fees.

After-School Programs

The Math and Reading Academies have been launched and are going very well. The program has introduced new workbooks and technology to keep students engaged right through to the end of the session. A high number of students are consistently attending. There is a cap on participation, but teachers have worked to pull more students into the program, and it has turned into a very successful joint effort that is well received and wanted by families.

Admissions and Enrollment

So far, the school has received 400 applications. The administration expects the equivalent of at least one full Kindergarten class to be reserved for siblings, leaving only 50 slots open. There are not many spots available in upper grades, so we expect a decrease of applicants in those grades. The Executive Director noted that it is a good sign that there have been many questions at the Open Houses about Special Education (SPED) and English Language Learners (ELL).

The school continues to do outreach to local day cares, is hosting lunches for pre-school directors, and did a presentation at the LGBT center about charter schools. Overall, the Executive Director is satisfied with the schools outreach and its continued efforts to reach out in a broader way and to increase the proportion of SPED and ELL students.

Facilities Committee Report - Brian Ferguson

Response to EDC RFP

Our proposal to the EDC has neither been accepted nor formally rejected. Most of the questions at the meeting our representatives attended to present the proposal revolved around finances, yet Finance expertise was not represented by EDC at the meeting, so it appears there was a fundamental lack of understanding of that aspect of our proposal.

We are seeking advice as to how to make our proposal more understandable and attractive to the EDC. In doing so, we have also received advise that we should ensure that the education people at the mayor's office express their interest in our project as an educational priority. We will also seek to clarify the long-term value proposition of increasing the value of the building for our landlord.

Education Committee Report - Melissa Chin and Brian Ferguson

- The Teachers and Leadership evaluation plan has been submitted to the State
- The state-mandated Student Learning outcomes have also been submitted.
- The teacher survey based on the North Carolina model is ready to be distributed in early March

Development Committee Report - Marc Crusante

Development Plan

The Development Director met with the chair of the Development Committee to edit the proposed Development Plan which will be reviewed by the Committee and then the full board. The Board agreed that it would like to review the plan in detail at the April 13 Strategic Plan meeting.

Grant Applications

The Director is reviewing criteria for a federal Arts in Education dissemination grant, and is exploring the possibility of partnering with external arts organizations. He reported that he already had a great meeting with the Museum of the Moving Image, and will meet with the Astoria Performing Arts Center. It was agreed that there should be some additional internal discussions before pitching this externally. In the meantime, the application for the 21st Century Community Learning Center grant has been submitted to NYSED and we're hoping to hear from them in March.

Advocacy Day

Students went to Albany again this year with they met with elected officials. The administration was pleased with the positive response and spontaneous request from our elected representatives to stay in touch and to let them know what we need. The school has received discretionary funding via Peralta (\$10K) and Onorato (\$15K) and is making a request to Van Bramer. Another Representative who hopes that a charter school will open in his district paid a visit to OWN.

Annual Report

The Annual Report has been completed, included updated Financials, and will be submitted to the Committee for review.

Joint Finance & Audit Committee Report - Steven Solinsky

Special Audit

The special audit requested by the Committee to review the distribution of MetroCards to staff has been completed and a meeting is scheduled for next week to review the findings. The auditors have already informed us that they have no findings to report, but they may make recommendations regarding our process to reduce risk.

Mid-year Financial Statements

The Committee reviewed the mid-year financial statements which were distributed to the full Board, and noted that they are firmly on target, and very close to budgeted amounts. Certain details were highlighted including a greatly reduced phone bill, and the high employee participation rates in the retirement savings plan. The Committee also reminded the Board that while the PICCS grant is currently covering 90% of merit bonuses to staff, OWN's share of the bonuses will go over time. The school continues to hold a strong cash position.

Policy and Procedure Manual

The Business Office has received a second revision of the new manual and will send it to the Committee by the end of the week for review.

Faculty Report – Jayme Pabon

- The second Quarter ended right before the Winter Break this month. The Q2 Honor Roll Assembly will be held on March 6th
- Curriculum Night and a school dance and were held, but the basketball fundraiser for victims of Hurricane Sandy had to be postponed.
- A new fundraiser called Jeans for Teens was introduced at the Middle School, serving as a clothing drive and a way of building awareness about runaway teens. The annual Jump Rope for Heart fundraiser organized each year by Ms. Pabon raised \$800 for the American Heart Association.
- The Middle School is hosting a meeting for 7th Grade parents about the high school application process.

PTO Report – Sarah Espanol

- Grades K-2 are sponsoring an Arts day for families, and Grades 3-5 are hosting a Karaoke night.
- Grade Representatives are planning Teacher Appreciation week at both schools.
- Planning for the Carnival is well under way.

Upon motion duly made, seconded and carried, the Trustees:

RESOLVED to approve the Financial Report for the Quarter ending December 31, 2012.

Upon motion duly made, seconded and carried, the Trustees:

RESOLVED to approve the bank reconciliations for October, November and December, 2012.

Upon motion duly made, seconded and carried, the Trustees:

RESOLVED to elect Charles Guadagnolo to the Board for a term ending in 2015.

Executive Session

An Executive Sessions was held after the Open Meeting.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by:

Maura Fitzgerald, Secretary, OWNCS Board of Trustees